



March 3, 2009

Dear Chairman and Members of the Senate Homeland Security and Emerging Technologies Committee:

The Michigan Townships Association (MTA) appreciates the foresight of this committee to review actions taken by the Michigan Council on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES) to define the qualifications of a law enforcement officer. As you are aware, at its April 2008 meeting, MCOLES defined a law enforcement officer as someone who works at least 520 hours in a twelve month period. The current definition of a law enforcement officer does not include any such hourly criteria.

MTA is seriously concerned with these actions by MCOLES. Even though there are several years before this definition is recommended to take effect, MTA is already hearing concerns from local officials about the new definition. By defining such a rigorous standard (520 hours), many local governments with smaller populations will be greatly challenged to maintain their own law enforcement department. Many local governments hire part-time officers to help patrol during peak summer times, festivals and special events. Often officers are hired after full law enforcement careers and only want to work a few months out of the year. The new MCOLES definition will greatly hamper many qualified (career) candidates from accepting law enforcement positions.

MTA appreciates the efforts of this committee to review the new definition of a law enforcement officer that was adopted by MCOLES. MTA understands that this would be one of (if not the most) the most rigid definitions in the country. At a time when local governments are stressed by lower revenue sharing funding and lower tax revenues, making it more difficult to find qualified law enforcement personnel would cause considerable challenges and likely the elimination of law enforcement departments in many communities.

MTA is willing to work with your committee on this issue. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 517-321-6467 or at david@michigantownships.org.

Sincerely,

David Bertram
MTA Legislative Liaison

Serving 1242 Townships and 6500 Official